NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

THE bulletin

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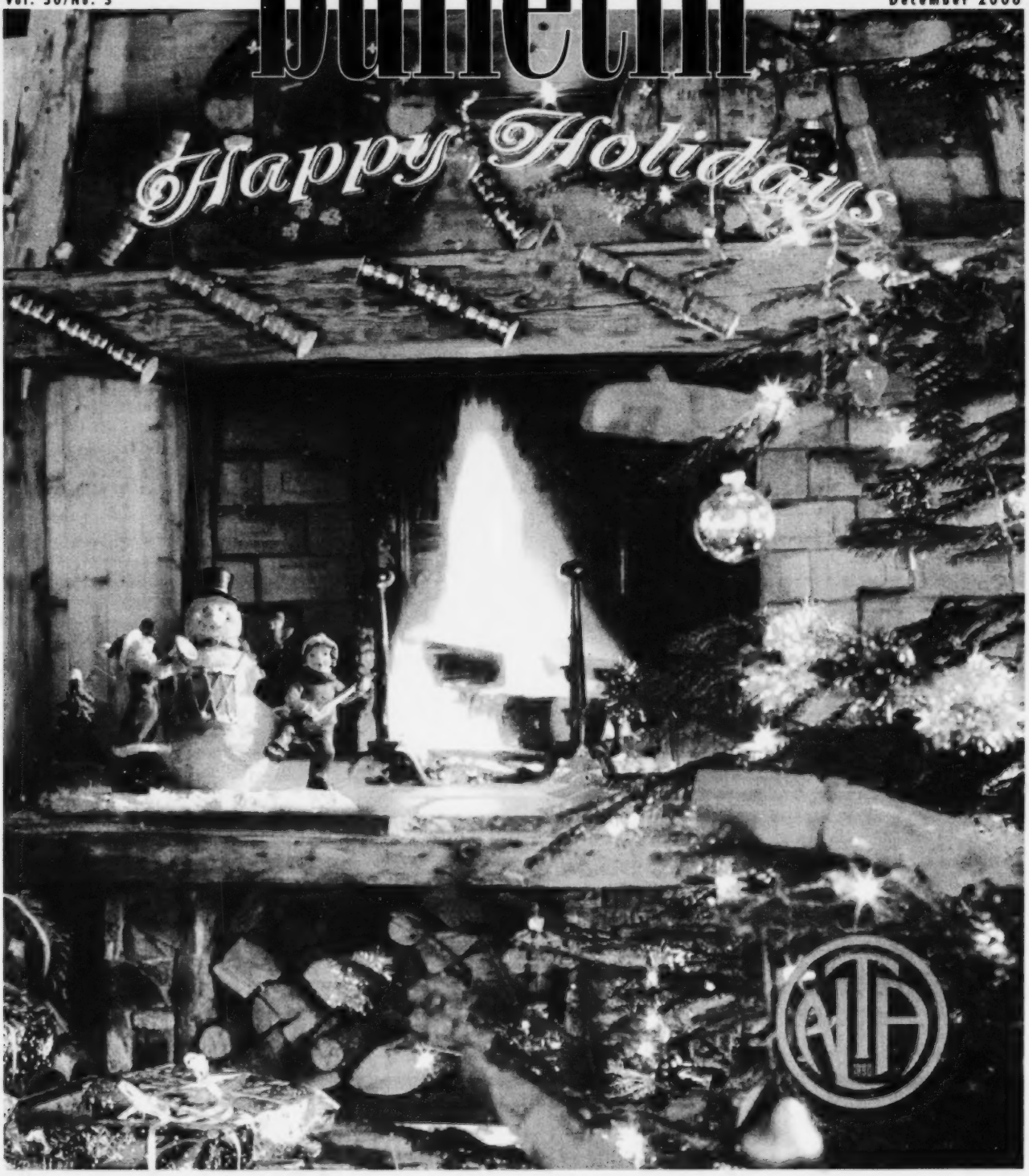
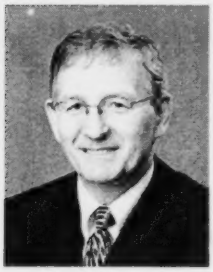


Up Front from the President



"If we want to build stronger, wealthier communities, if we want to combat illness and poverty, if we want fairer and more equal societies, then education is the only way forward."
– McKinnon 2003

If we agree with the above quote, and it would be hard not to, it could easily be argued and should logically follow that teachers, then, are the most important agents in any society. I believe the quote to be true and I also believe teachers are the backbone of any society. They are the movers and shakers. Whenever any society wants to go in a new direction, whether it is teaching that the earth is round or that the king/queen is the ultimate authority, or that inclusion is the best form of education delivery, teachers will be offered a new curriculum, hopefully with the appropriate training or inservice, and within a short period of time the idea materializes.

My own entrance into the education field, fresh out of university, coupled with my observations over a 28 year teaching career have provided me with enough experiences and evidence to argue that the dominant influence, by far, on shaping the direction of this province has been teachers.

As an aside, in addition to what is happening in the actual school setting and all that goes with it, if you get an opportunity observe closely the number of organizations in our province that are led by or influenced extensively by teachers... all of which add to the quality of life of the citizens of our province. As well, teachers are one of the leading agents of democratic reform. If you want to see teachers' commitment to democracy or to their understanding of the real issues facing our world, observe the number of teachers involved in municipal, provincial or federal governments throughout the years in our province.

I've also been on this planet long enough to have witnessed the transformation of our society here in Newfoundland and Labrador as our Education graduates fanned out across this province from Nain to Trepassey and every community in between. No other area in the lives of the people of this province have evolved to the degree or at the pace than that of education.

From my perspective, the reason education has advanced to this degree over the years is because of the tenacious commitment our teachers have made to helping others learn. From the early one-room schools that, with all their limitations, produced world class scholars to the centralized schools of today that are regularly sending thousands upon thousands of our graduates to confidently take their places in the world, the passion and commitment of creative, dedicated teachers are making it happen.

Governments, it appears, are finally starting to see the connection between our standard of living and standard of education and it seems they have finally decided to do something about it. The establishment of both the review of the teacher allocation formula and the review of the Pathways model are probably manifestations of this newfound understanding. By the time this Up Front article makes it to print, most of the submissions to both these commissions will have been made. It is my hope that the recommendations are realistic and are adopted by Government so that teaching and learning are improved for all concerned.

Have a wonderful, restful and peaceful Christmas season and thanks for all you do.

Kevin

THE bulletin

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PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

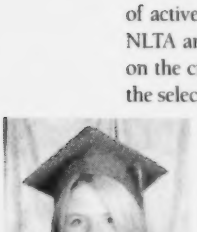
NEWS

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

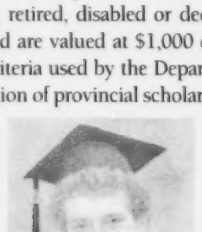
NLTA Scholarship winners announced

Six Newfoundland and Labrador students who completed high school last June have been award NLTA scholarships for 2005-06. They are: Erin Aylward (Holy Heart High School), daughter of Elaine Aylward, Mount Pearl; Jonathan Best (Marystown Central High School), son of Brenda Best, Creston South; Michael Darcy (Lester Pearson Memorial High), son of Iris Darcy, Brookfield; Matthew Drover (Ascension Collegiate), son of Lorraine Drover, Upper Island Cove; Alison Pittman (Gander Collegiate), daughter of James and Lorraine Pittman, Gander; and Alicia Wall (Exploits Valley High), daughter of Nellie Wall, Grand Falls-Windsor.

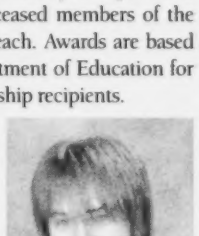
The scholarships are awarded annually to dependents of active, retired, disabled or deceased members of the NLTA and are valued at $1,000 each. Awards are based on the criteria used by the Department of Education for the selection of provincial scholarship recipients.



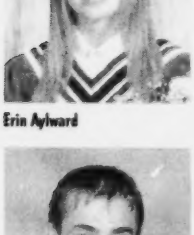
Erin Aylward



Jonathan Best

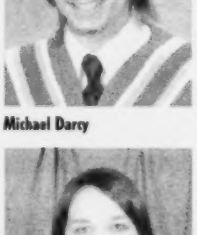


Michael Darcy



Matthew Drover

Alison Pittman



Alicia Wall

Women's History Month poster contest for grade 7/8 students

Grade 7 and 8 students in Newfoundland and Labrador and invited to create a poster for Women's History Month with the theme "Awareness, Activism, and Achievement". Posters should highlight an event or issue related to the Women's Movement in Newfoundland and Labrador in the 70s and 80s.

The goal of the poster is to raise students' awareness of the women's movement in Newfoundland and Labrador during that time and encourage others to learn more about this exciting part of our history. The poster must also promote the *Let's Teach About Women* website at www.teachaboutwomen.ca

Posters must be designed in an 11" x 17" format. Posters may be either colour or black and white, and all artwork must be hand-drawn (no computer generated graphics). Entries must include the following information: Student Name, Grade, School Name and Phone Number, and Name of Teacher. Only one entry per student is allowed.

Entries must be sent to the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, 3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NL, A1B 1W1 by January 15, 2007.

The student who designs the winning poster will receive $100 and a professionally mounted copy of their poster. The winning poster will be in schools all over Newfoundland and Labrador for Women's History Month next October. Two runner-up prizes of $50 will also be awarded.

Judging will be based on equal consideration of the following criteria: overall design of poster; quality of artwork; successful expression of the theme; and use of relevant content to support the theme. Winners will be notified by February 28, 2007.

The *Let's Teach About Women* website gratefully acknowledges the support for this contest by the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association.

Get involved in World Oceans Day 2007

Many of you may be wondering, what's all this talk about World Oceans Day? How did it start? How can my class and I get involved?

June 8th was first recognized as World Oceans Day at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 when more than 150 countries signed a petition to express a shared belief that action must be taken to halt the worldwide loss of animal and plant species and genetic resources.

For many years, across the entire province, various groups and organizations have celebrated World Oceans Day. Since 1993, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) in the Newfoundland and Labrador Region has celebrated World Oceans Day by hosting special events and activities that promote ocean health.

This past year, DFO wanted to develop a network of federal, provincial, municipal and community partners who would work together to plan and support World Oceans Day activities in Newfoundland and Labrador; to promote local and regional venues that can be used to highlight how Canadians can be effective water stewards.

A committee of over 20 different organizations, all linked to the protection and conservation of our oceans and marine life, was formed in January 2006. Plans were made and the 2006 Oceans Day event took place at the Marine Institute and The Fluvarium, in St. John's.

On June 8, 2006, over 225 Grade 4, 5, and 6 students, teachers, parents and volunteers attended this event. Eleven different presentations, games and interactive sessions were offered at both locations. The students had the opportunity to touch live lobsters and crabs, look through and learn about the night vision binoculars fishery officer's use, listen to whale sounds, view a real life watershed and so much more!

World Oceans Day is about much more than the protection and conservation of the world's oceans; it's about developing an understanding and encouraging education, and what better place to start than with young inspiring students.

Having your students participate in World Oceans Day is a great way to get them involved with their local communities, have fun outside the classroom and learn something new, all along the way!

Consider having your class participate in next year's Oceans Day event. Be sure to watch out for DFO committee notices in the new year!

Free Software!
What's the Catch?

All too often we see an offer for software that's supposedly free, only to find out that there are strings attached which we don't particularly like. Thus, it is important to know the difference between Shareware, Free to Try, Freeware and Free Software.

Shareware is defined as "software distributed freely, but with certain conditions applying to it. Either the software is released on a trial basis only, and must be registered after a certain period of time, or in other cases no support can be offered with the software without registering it. In some cases direct payment to the author is required." The bottom line is that it isn't really free.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shareware)

Free to Try usually means that you may download a version of an application that may have several critical functions disabled. You may use the software for a period of days after which you must register and purchase a full copy in order to continue using it.

Freeware is computer software which is made available free of charge, although typically freeware is proprietary. It is usually distributed without source code and often carries a restrictive license. For example, a license might allow the software to be freely copied, but not sold, or might forbid commercial, government or military use.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freeware)

Free Software gives the user freedom to run, copy, distribute, study, change and improve the software. The user has freedom to run the program, for any purpose; to study how the program works, and adapt it; to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbor; to improve the program, and release those improvements to the public.
(http://www.fsf.org)

The Virtual Teacher Centre is continuously updating a list of Freeware and Free Software that is currently available for download. These range from office applications to games. You will find software for use in an art class, math class, language arts and in social studies. In fact, there are very few areas in which you won't find something useful. The list also contains utilities and software for video, audio, graphics, photography and your computer. The VTC assumes no responsibility for how well these applications work or for how long they will be available. However, the VTC will update the list regularly.

Visit the Virtual Teacher Centre at
www.virtualteachercentre.ca
and look for **Software** on the opening page.

TOPSAIL

Students give to Operation Christmas Child

Students at Topsail Elementary continue the tradition of giving to Operation Christmas Child. "This is one project that students never get tired of doing," says Colleen King, a Grade 5 teacher at Topsail Elementary. "Students today are very much aware of how fortunate they are compared to children in other parts of the world. Every year at Topsail Elementary when it's time to fill up the boxes to go to the third world countries, the students are quite eager and willing to meet the deadline and show their generosity. There is always an overwhelming response."

Ms. King's Grade 5 class with boxes for Operation Christmas Child.

CANADA

Gene Researcher for a Week

For the fifth year, Canadian high school students in grades 11 and 12 are being given the opportunity to spend their week of spring break in the genetic research labs of top Canadian scientists. Eligible students are invited to apply for Gene Researcher for a Week – The Rt. Hon. Ramon Hnatyshyn Youth in Science Initiative.

Students selected could get the chance to work with DNA, RNA and proteins, DNA isolation and purification, PCR, SDS-Page, gel electrophoresis, DNA sequencing and Western blotting.

Only 30 students from across Canada will be chosen to spend their spring break in the lab of one of Canada's leading gene researchers. Students will work alongside scientists, graduate students and technicians to plan and carry out experiments. They will learn techniques and procedures that genetic researchers use to study human disease and will attend lab meetings and get first-hand experience with what it is like to work in a hospital or research institute.

The selected students will receive a daily transportation and meal allowance. Students requiring air travel will receive a travel and accommodation bursary in addition to a daily meal and transportation allowance.

For more information and how to apply, visit www.cgdn.ca, follow the link on the main page and complete the on-line application. If you have questions, e-mail Stephanie Shu, Project Coordinator, at sshu@cgdn.ca or call (604) 221-7300 x 110.

The deadline for applications and reference letters is December 31, 2006.

OTTAWA

John Staple appointed new Deputy Secretary General of CTF

The CTF Board of Directors has appointed John Staple to the position of Deputy Secretary General of the Canadian Teachers' Federation. John assumed his duties on November 15, 2006. For the past nine years he has been the Director of Economic and Member Services at CTF, providing information, research, and assistance to teacher organizations on trends and issues in education and educational finance, teacher demographics, and collective bargaining at provincial and federal levels in Canada. He has served in this position since retiring from the NLTA Administrative Staff in 1997. Prior to leaving the NLTA in 1997, John had worked for 14 years on the Administrative Staff in the Association's Benefits and Economic Services Division. During that time he served as Director of Benefits and Economic Services and was the NLTA's chief negotiator in a number of rounds of provincial contract negotiations.

In commenting on John's appointment, CTF President Winston Carter stated: "The Deputy Secretary General plays a critical role in overseeing financial and administrative functions at CTF. It is a strategic position that requires expertise in finance, administration, program development, and partnership building. John has formidable talent in all of these areas plus extensive experience as an educator. We are very fortunate to have someone of his caliber in this position."

John's career in education started in 1968 as a teacher, then department head, and later school district program coordinator in St. John's.

We wish John every success in his new position.

My Working Environment: What Can I Do?

by EDWARD HANCOCK

"The evidence is strong that working conditions matter, and that they influence the performance of teachers and therefore the learning of students."

This statement is made by Dr. Kenneth Leithwood in his report prepared for the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, entitled *Teacher Working Conditions That Matter: Evidence for Change*. An article providing a summary of Dr. Leithwood's report was included in the September/October 2006 edition of *The Bulletin*.

Dr. Leithwood goes on to state: "We know which working conditions have positive effects on teachers' performance and which have negative effects. And there is evidence that points to causes and sources of these working conditions that matter. This is the kind of information, backed by evidence, that can now be used to make a difference. There are things that all of us can do." He then concludes his report with recommendations for all parties whose decisions and actions affect teachers' work life situations, including those at the provincial, district and school levels. For example, he recommends that provincial policy makers should be highly strategic about the demands for change that they place on teachers. His strong message for those at the provincial level whose decisions are causing "change overload" for teachers is "Do less. Both students and teachers will be the better for it." His recommendations to district level administration and to principals is to focus their efforts on developing more positive teacher working conditions, such as:

- Keeping teachers' overall pupil load manageable;
- Ensuring that teachers are able to teach in their areas of expertise whenever possible;
- Developing school wide supports for dealing with student misbehavior;
- Allowing teachers as much autonomy as possible over their instructional duties;
- Ensuring teachers have the opportunity to participate in school decision making; and
- Fostering a positive school atmosphere.

A number of recommendations for teachers are also included by Leithwood. While it is recognized that teachers do not individually have direct control over the physical environment or the demands of the workplace, these teacher-directed recommendations focus on some responses to the work environment which are within the control of the teacher. They include:

1. Build your own network of professional colleagues.
Such a network can be a powerful source of ongoing, informal professional development, can provide support and (in some cases) a sharing of planning and preparation workload, and a social support. Leithwood advises that teachers should "stay connected, especially when there seems to be too much marking to go to the staff room or out to lunch with their colleagues."

2. Be proactive about your own professional development.
Leithwood notes that considerable evidence now suggests that the most powerful forms of teacher professional development are often informal, designed by teachers themselves and take place in their own schools. Because such activities are often not formally structured events, they may not even be recognized as professional development. But interaction with colleagues generally, meeting and discussing issues with teachers who are teaching the same courses/grades, sharing materials and strategies, and reading articles from professional journals can all be valuable professional development activities for teachers.

3. Expect effective leadership from your administrators.
Leithwood characterizes effective leadership as being "collaborative, supportive, consistent, friendly, informative, instructionally expert, there when you need help, skilled in finding the resources you require, anxious to learn your views, reasonable in its demands, concerned about your welfare, and clear and explicit about priorities". He recommends that teachers should share their views and advice with administrators and should expect to be consulted when key decisions are being

made. He advises that teachers should let administrators know when they do something that works and let them know, diplomatically, when their decisions are questionable.

4. Insist on having a voice in decision making.
Collective decision making in a collegial work atmosphere enables the school to make use of the collective wisdom of its staff and affords teachers the opportunity to shape their work and the work of their colleagues.

5. Put realistic boundaries around your volunteer work.
Teachers have the least choice about that part of their work which is spent on classroom instruction and the preparation and marking required for same. However, there is more choice around those parts of the job involved in being a "member of the school organization". This includes extracurricular activities, individual tutoring, leading or organizing school events, fund-raising, district and school committees, school councils, etcetera. Leithwood advises that "when workload demands begin to be overwhelming, learn how to say no" to some of those work demands over which you have more choice.

My previous article in *The Bulletin* on this research noted that quite a number of the significant factors affecting teachers' working conditions are directly impacted by the level of financial and human resources provided to schools. Your Association continues its efforts on many fronts to try and ensure the necessary resources are being provided to education so that teachers' working conditions and students' learning conditions are improved. In the meantime, Leithwood's work suggests some approaches for teachers to alleviate the sometimes overwhelming impacts of work overload.

Give some consideration to these and other strategies as you approach the first real "break" in the school year. And be sure to take some necessary time for self during the Christmas break, to slow things down while enjoying the closeness and company of family and friends. On behalf of all our staff here at the NLTA office, I offer best wishes for a very happy Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year.

Ed

Who Wants $300,000 or More?

by DON ASH

Do you have your Grade VII Teaching Certificate? If not, are you working towards your Grade VII? The fall pre-retirement seminars are currently ongoing and in my role as facilitator of these seminars, I find myself regularly speaking with teachers who regret not having obtained their Grade VII at least prior to their last five years of teaching. The purpose of this article is to encourage those of you without Grade VII to consider upgrading by pointing out the financial advantages of doing so. The timing is significant because the deadline for applying for paid educational leaves is fast approaching – February 1. Actually, most Boards prefer (and may require) application prior to this date. Teachers should also contact Rob Parsons at Teacher Certification (709-729-3020; robparsons@gov.nl.ca) prior to applying for educational leave to ensure the educational program of studies chosen is approved for upgrading purposes.

The current salaries at top of scale are Grade V – $53,545, Grade VI – $62,018, and Grade VII – $70,161. Clearly, obtaining Grade VII early in one's career adds significantly to one's lifetime earnings as a teacher. By the 10th year of teaching you are at the top of the scale and the difference in annual salary for Grade V to VII is over $16,000 annually.

A teacher's pension is based on a defined benefit of the total accrued pension times the best five-year average salary. Currently, teachers accrue 2% pension for every year they work and pay into the main Teachers' Pension Plan. For example, take fictitious teacher Madonna – a teacher who will have a pension accrual of 66% at the time of retirement. The actual dollar amount of pension for Madonna is 66% times her best five-year average salary. Consider the pension payable to Madonna under Certificate V, VI, or VII if she were able to retire at the end of 2007.

Certificate	5 Year Annual Salary (2002-07)	Pension Accrual Rate	Annual Pension
V	$51,498	0.66	$33,988
VI	$59,649	0.66	$39,368
VII	$67,480	0.66	$44,536

Thus, Madonna's pension with Grade VII will be over $10,000 greater per year than her pension would be with Grade V. Assuming Madonna is in her mid-50s, she is likely to be on pension for over 30 years. At $10,000 per year Madonna has increased her retirement income by over $300,000 by obtaining Certificate VII.

From a non-financial perspective, as teachers we are lifelong learners. Upgrading our teacher certification assists us with our professional and personal development which can only enrich both our lives and the lives of our students.

A limited number of one semester educational leaves are available under the collective agreement at 80% salary to assist teachers pursuing certificate upgrades. Information and application forms are available through the Professional Development Division of the NLTA, and online at www.nlta.nl.ca.

Through teacher certification upgrading, individual teachers have direct control over their income both while teaching and into retirement. If you are looking for over $300,000 and have not already done so, I suggest you consider beginning the process of upgrading your teaching certificate. For those of you that don't, there's always the Lotto.

Don Ash is an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA.

School Rep Seminars 2006

A Rewarding Experience

This past fall, NLTA school representative seminars were held in Grand Falls-Windsor, Corner Brook and St. John's as part of NLTA's initiative to meet with school representatives each year. The intent is to keep school representatives informed and up to date on NLTA programs and services as well as inform new school representatives of their important role within the structure of the NLTA.

Teams of administrative staff from the NLTA planned and carried out the day and a half sessions throughout the province. The agenda items included a follow-up session on the topics from previous seminars, sessions on NLTA programs and services, the viewing of *The NLTA and You* video, a group discussion on What's a School Rep to Do?, which involved a review of case studies of various situations that school representatives may have to deal with. A question and answer session was included with each session and school representatives had an opportunity to provide feedback as well as ask questions on any issue that concerned them.

Feedback from the seminars was very positive and school representatives in attendance were appreciative of the time and work that went into the sessions. NLTA staff found the sessions to be just as rewarding as they were able to meet one-on-one with the NLTA school representatives and provide them with essential information about the NLTA.

The province has been divided into nine regions, and three seminars will be held each fall so that schools will be provided the opportunity to have a representative attend a seminar every three years.

The next series of seminars will be held in the fall of 2007. A notification of dates and locations will be announced as soon as they are available.

Go Resilient

by MARIE WALL

In considering personal resiliency there are two factors that stand out – the necessity to bounce back in constantly changing times and whether it can be learned. The focus of our Wellness articles this year is "Go Healthy", the Newfoundland and Labrador health initiative. On first glance this could be construed as a physical health campaign, but just as important is mental health. All components of health are intertwined – physical impacting mental health and vice versa. In this article we will consider several components of resiliency, it's foundation for mental health, its need in coping with work and home life, its requirement when embarking on a healthy lifestyle in general and the skills that will support you in becoming more resilient.

Whether it is personal or professional change, external pressures or a setback in your life, being resilient is an advantage. According to the American Psychological Association (2004), "Resilience is an interactive product of beliefs, attitudes, approaches, behaviors, and perhaps physiology that help people fare better during adversity and recover more quickly following it." The advantage of rebounding after a difficult situation is sustained health and energy. Mental health is more than the absence of illness; it is not something that just occurs or not. Mental health can be likened to physical fitness. You can improve your fitness by considering what mental shape you want to be in and then take steps towards that state. Initially you may have general notions of what you want and require specific information to help you obtain your goal. You can improve your mental health. While you may not know exactly what steps are required, a general desire to have a more rewarding life is the first big step.

You may know someone you think is resilient and you may admiringly think this is a natural quality, but if that is the case, it is time to think again. While resilience is an innate tendency that exists in all human beings, for some it may need to be relearned because life circumstances may have dampened a person's ability to recover from a difficult situation. We often see how children bounce back from unfortunate situations or adversity. The phrase "children are so resilient" is commonly heard. If children have this trait, adults do too. Whether it is overt or laying dormant, rekindling resilience will improve one's mental outlook.

There are steps that can be taken to move towards feeling stronger. The first is to make a commitment to your mental health, then build the necessary skills to navigate obstacles, develop inner strengths and create a positive attitude. Each of these skills builds on the others. A positive attitude without personal confidence is not a recipe for resilience. Here you will be guided through each to assess where you are already strong and what areas need work.

The second step – learn the personal coping skills. Effective problem solving, decision making and time management skills enhance one's confidence. When we learn them, we learn to trust ourself. A person who focuses on solving a problem is empowered to make changes rather than become helpless or disengaged. The solution may be personal or it could be a group solution; either way, you will enjoy better relationships with others and enjoy improved mental health. Indecisiveness can greatly impact how you feel about yourself. Exploring the options, both logically and emotionally, will give you a sense of what needs to be done and what you can live with. One way to make the options explicit is to write them so you can see them in front of you. Then weigh all the alternatives and make a decision. Once a decision is made you will often feel relief, then trust that if further decisions are required you will be able to make those too. Along with these skills, time management gives you confidence in yourself when dealing with things as they occur. Unforeseen events can be overwhelming. Having the confidence that you can manage will go a long way in reassuring yourself that things will be better in time. Skills are learned either through observation and imitation, as a child may, or by a concerted effort in adulthood. Either way, you are in the driver's seat in acquiring the tools that will assist in coping.

A third component for resiliency is having a healthy self-image. We may be very competent professionally but personally doubt ourselves; thus, when events occur there will be an uncertainty about one's ability to manage. Self-image is comprised of three important inter-related characteristics. Self-esteem is how you feel about yourself, self-concept is how you see yourself and self-confidence is what you expect of yourself. Notice that each of these characteristics is self-focused, or

inner focused. Often people are taught to be external and other focused. Yet if you do not know yourself, your feelings and your expectations will make you uncertain about how to proceed. You can look at this as "selfish unselfish", for in knowing and trusting yourself you will be much more capable in all situations. Take the time to really understand and trust your inner life. It is this type of self-awareness that sets a foundation for dealing with all types of situations.

Lastly, perception is essential to becoming resilient. Perception is how you view events that occur either regularly or occasionally. If you believe that life will go along smoothly without any undesired or unforeseen events, unanticipated incidents will take you off guard. As well, you will have to cope with the stress of feeling vulnerable and dealing with what needs your attention. By assuming events will occur and trusting that you can manage even the unforeseen, you will have more confidence in yourself and your ability to cope. Al Siebert, author of *The Resiliency Advantage*, differentiates between stress and strain; he says stress is an external pressure while strain is the internal effect. Stressors are fairly constant because external pressures challenge you frequently. How you manage the stressors will indicate your coping ability. Expecting that things will occur and trusting your ability to manage time are important factors in being resilient.

Resiliency is necessary in today's changing environments both at home and at work. Becoming more resilient is a process and is required for better mental health. Take some time to consider in what ways you are resilient and in what ways you would like to become better equipped. If you have a difficult time imagining how to do this, think of a person you consider resilient and consider what qualities they possess and how you might learn them. In writing this article I consulted the book, *The Resiliency Advantage*, by Al Siebert, as referenced above. It is written as a tool to build resiliency and I have no hesitation in recommending it. Also, I suggest you may consider working with a counsellor to enhance your mental health capacity. If you want to discuss this further please call. We can recommend a counsellor and cost share the fees.

Marie Wall is an EAP Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for teachers. For confidential assistance contact Marie Wall (ext. 265) or Kathy Taylor-Rogers (ext. 242).

Health and Wellness Seminar

Realign Your Sense of Balance

by ASHER CUTTING

The teachers at Millcrest Academy in Grand Falls-Windsor attended an overnight "Health and Wellness" seminar in September at the Lion Max Simms Camp. This peaceful retreat, situated near Bishop's Falls, features a lakeside lodge with miles of walking trails. The presenter was Marie Wall, a Coordinator for EAP for Teachers.

The focus of the seminar was to give teachers and student assistants a chance to think about some of the challenges that we face in terms of our own health and wellness, and equip us with some strategies to help us in this field. Items on the agenda included a discussion about the importance of diet and exercise, but also of the importance of resting and maintaining a well balanced lifestyle.

Citing some of the larger health initiatives that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is ushering in such as "Go Healthy Newfoundland & Labrador," Marie noted that healthy living involves more than just going on a diet now and then; healthy living requires a comprehensive refocusing of one's way of life. The concept that has long been promoted to maintain physical and mental health is the idea of balance. A balance between work and play, family and hobbies, activity and rest, healthy food and the occasional treat are fundamental to achieving a healthy way of life. As Marie stated, however, the idea of balance is often just that, an idea. Teachers tend to display characteristics that make it very difficult to achieve a balanced lifestyle. These tendencies can end up causing us great harm. The fact that teachers tend to be people who are driven to succeed and see those around them succeed as well, creates a conflict. In order to satisfy the teacher's need to see others succeed, a disproportionate amount of time is devoted to work. We throw ourselves into whatever it is we are doing. Once family needs and other commitments have been met, there is virtually no time left to invest in oneself. It is easy to see how this can lead to decreased health, family tension, and burnout.

Staff at Millcrest Academy take part in a "Health and Wellness" seminar.

The solution is not easy, says Marie, but it is there. One absolutely must take the time to stop everything and think about some strategies that would make life easier. Think of strategies that will allow for time to be spent doing some of the things that we enjoy, that will restore the balance. Look around. What are some of the resources that are available to help live a healthier life? Is there a gym nearby that you could attend for a quick workout three times a week if you left work a bit earlier on those days? Could you find a reliable babysitter and take a night here and there to go out with some friends and recharge?

Perhaps one of the hardest things to do is to learn how to say "no". In the course of the day, there are an extraordinary number of demands placed on a teacher, demands that we are all too willing to accommodate. The reality of the situation is that if, on occasion, you say "no" where you would normally say "yes," the consequences will likely be far less serious than you would think. The Christmas assembly will still go on even

though you said "Sorry, I can't paint the set tonight at 9:30 after rehearsal; I don't have time."

A leisurely stroll through the woods in a quiet place can rejuvenate you after the 8:00 to 4:00 hustle and bustle, and provide some well deserved and needed time to regroup. It might take some work to actually stop and realign your sense of balance; the key is to think of it as an investment in you. Just try it – the pay-off could be worth it!

"It might take some work to actually stop and realign your sense of balance; the key is to think of it as an investment in you."

If the teachers on your staff are looking for a worthwhile way to spend a professional development day, then I would highly recommend that you give consideration to contacting one of the Employee Assistance Coordinators to request a workshop. The coordinators can provide workshops on a wide variety of topics that relate to Teacher Wellness including: *Healthy Living, Time Management and Organization, Coping with Stress* and *Emotional Well-Being with Resilience*. These workshops not only provide useful information on topics offered, but also give staff time to reflect on and explore how they can make important changes to improve their personal and professional lives and find that all important balance between the two.

Asher Cutting is a Grade 4 French Immersion teacher at Millcrest Academy in Grand Falls-Windsor.

« Être francophone » ne se conjugue pas à l'impératif

par MARIANNE CORMIER

Comment mettre en place une pédagogie pour la minorité? Pennac, dans son livre remarquable *Comme un roman*, nous avertit fermement : Le verbe lire, tout comme le verbe aimer, ne supporte pas l'impératif!

Essayons le même exercice avec la construction identitaire : Va, sois francophone! Parle français! Écoute la musique française! Sois fier de qui tu es!

Ouache! L'identité et la fierté francophones ne s'imposent pas!

Les attentes à l'égard des écoles œuvrant en milieu francophone minoritaire sont tout de même énormes. On veut que l'école sache créer un espace idéal où la langue et la culture sont à l'affiche. On souhaite un lieu qui réussit à imprégner ses élèves d'une fierté identitaire forte et capable de contrer l'assimilation. PAS FACILE!

Nous sommes à l'ère de la mondialisation et de la société postmoderne, et la langue anglaise prend de plus en plus de place. Devant cette influence grandissante sur les communautés minoritaires, la tâche attendue de l'école, que l'on veut le contrepoids à cette pression, s'alourdit sans cesse.

L'article 23 de *la Charte* assure, aux parents qui répondent à certains critères, l'accès à une école de langue française pour leurs enfants. L'instruction et la gestion de l'école se déroulent en français. Est-ce suffisant pour en arriver à construire une identité francophone? Non, de toute évidence, car la mission de l'école en milieu minoritaire va bien au-delà d'un projet linguistique (Laplante, 2001).

Que faire donc? Quelle pédagogie privilégier?

Au-delà de l'instruction en français, il faut viser une pédagogie qui sait agir sur les tensions identitaires, réagir aux injustices sociétales, développer une appartenance communautaire et construire un rapport positif à la langue. Comment? D'abord, visons le développement du plein potentiel des élèves, dans leurs dimensions intrapersonnelles, interpersonnelles et sociales, par le biais d'une pédagogie actualisante (Faculté des sciences de l'éducation, Université de Moncton, 2001). Une telle pédagogie est valable pour toute population, peu importe le milieu où se trouve l'école. Ajoutons une pédagogie différenciée (Tomlinson, 2003) pour répondre aux besoins uniques de chaque élève, et savoir composer avec les classes de nos milieux qui deviennent de plus en plus hétérogènes du point de vue culturel et qui se composent d'élèves avec divers degrés de francité (Gilbert, LeTouzé, Thériault et Landry, 2004). Ensuite, favorisons le développement du sentiment d'appartenance à la communauté au moyen d'une pédagogie communautarisante (Landry, 2003), qui maximise l'implication communautaire à l'école ainsi que le vécu des élèves dans la communauté. Enfin, installons une pédagogie transformative (Cummins, 2000), qui vise à combattre et à modifier l'idéologie implicite d'assimilation et de pouvoir coercitif du groupe majoritaire envers le groupe minoritaire. Dans cette pédagogie transformative, les élèves participent à des enquêtes critiques collaboratives, basées sur des principes de justice sociale. La compréhension des réalités sociales, telles que l'assimilation, les droits des individus et des collectivités, est à l'ordre du jour.

Comment mettre en place une pédagogie qui est actualisante, communautarisante, différenciée et transformative?

Examinons sept composantes interdépendantes et complémentaires de cette pédagogie :

1. Développement d'un rapport positif avec la langue, optimalisation de la production et de la réception langagières en français

D'abord, travaillons à établir un rapport positif avec la langue. Le message qui prévaut chez les jeunes vivant en milieu minoritaire est que le français n'est pas « cool ». Le statut et le prestige de l'anglais nourrissent cette perception. Par ailleurs, le milieu social fait en sorte que les occasions d'écouter, de parler, de lire et d'écrire le français sont rares. Outre les effets sur le prestige de la langue, notons les effets sur les compétences langagières. Ainsi, le deuxième message sera alors que le français est difficile.

À nous, enseignantes et enseignants, de changer ces conceptions. D'abord, démystifions le français. Offrons autant d'occasions que possible, informelles et formelles, de jouer, d'écouter, de parler, d'écrire en français. Écoutons des émissions de télé et des films en français, participons à des activités culturelles, écoutons la musique, lisons, lisons, lisons. Et, évitons la correction continuelle!

Provoquons des vécus autonomisants en français. L'élève devrait vivre des expériences positives lui donnant un sentiment d'appartenance à la communauté et de compétence dans sa langue. Le contexte devrait être motivant et non menaçant.

L'école met à profit un langage dit « académique » qui est décontextualisé et formel. Contrairement à une langue contextualisée et informelle d'une conversation typique, qui offre la possibilité de négocier le sens et qui fournit de nombreux indices situationnels, la langue décontextualisée dépend presque uniquement de la connaissance de la langue elle-même. Face à cette langue décontextualisée, les élèves éprouvent facilement de l'insécurité linguistique, se pensant incapables de la comprendre ou de la produire. La réaction typique d'un enseignant ou d'une enseignante serait de simplifier (résumer le texte à lire pour les élèves, fournir des notes plus simples, faire de nombreuses analogies et explications, éviter le vocabulaire technique). Bien que cette simplification soulage momentanément les élèves, elle n'apporte aucun bénéfice à long terme (Gibbons, 1998).

Comment ainsi faciliter l'accès des élèves à cette langue décontextualisée?

- Progresser graduellement vers une langue décontextualisée en retirant petit à petit les soutiens contextuels lors de la démarche d'apprentissage;
- Fournir de nombreuses occasions de discuter de façon authentique, car pour apprendre une langue, il faut la pratiquer;
- Reconnaître la langue parlée des élèves et construire sur la base de ces acquis;
- Intégrer des stratégies de compréhension de lecture, des discussions orales et des situations d'écriture dans toutes les matières scolaires;
- Maximiser les occasions littératiées : La lecture peut considérablement aider la compétence langagière et peut être la meilleure source de ce langage décontextualisé et formel; l'écriture permet l'expression de soi et l'appropriation de formes langagières;
- Employer une approche communicative : La langue devient réelle et on l'utilise pour une communication authentique.

2. *Enculturation active*

En liaison avec le développement d'un rapport positif avec la langue, les élèves devraient activement découvrir et embrasser leur culture. Toutefois, elle n'est pas facile d'accès et souvent éclipsée par la culture majoritaire. La connaître est un défi en soi. Par contre, déjà par les activités proposées dans la section précédente, il y a enculturation. On peut y ajouter l'élément de la pédagogie communautarisante, en invitant la communauté à l'école, en étudiant son histoire, en lisant des œuvres locales. Il y aurait lieu d'étudier la culture en suivant une démarche critique. Posons la question : « La communauté prend-elle la place qui lui revient? »

Ces activités seront idéalement proposées et planifiées par les élèves. Voilà comment l'enculturation deviendra active et donnera aux élèves un sentiment de pouvoir et d'autonomie.

(*suite à la page 18*)

3. *Actualisation maximale du potentiel d'apprentissage*

Une actualisation maximale du potentiel d'apprentissage exige des mesures visant à permettre au plus grand nombre possible d'élèves de maîtriser leurs apprentissages. Pour ce faire, l'évaluation doit être critériée et formative. Avec une meilleure connaissance des habiletés et des faiblesses de ses élèves, l'enseignant ou l'enseignante pourra prendre des actions pédagogiques en conséquence. La pédagogie deviendra alors différenciée.

4. *Développement de l'autodétermination et négociation identitaire*

Il arrive souvent, dans les écoles du milieu minoritaire, d'entendre des élèves s'exprimer en anglais et d'entendre, en réaction, des enseignantes et des enseignants leur demander de parler en français. Pour ces élèves, parler anglais est souvent le produit des forces sociales à l'œuvre dans leur milieu. L'imploration de « parler français » devient parfois une source de motivation extrinsèque, ou alors une occasion de rebuter l'autorité et de la contrarier en poursuivant la conversation anglaise. Il en va de même pour ce qui est d'écouter la musique ou la télé, de lire, d'écrire… en français. Peu importe!

Reconnaissons que l'adoption d'une identité, avec les comportements qui s'ensuivent, doit s'effectuer librement. Par contre, ce choix devrait-il uniquement résulter de l'attraction des forces sociales? Qu'en serait-il si les élèves étaient en mesure de connaître ces forces, de vivre des activités éducatives qui les mènent à découvrir leur culture et les choix identitaires qui s'offrent à eux?

Les élèves posséderont une motivation intrinsèque lorsque trois besoins de base seront comblés : l'autonomie, la compétence et l'appartenance. Des activités pédagogiques qui offrent des choix, permettent de vivre des succès et construisent un sentiment d'appartenance contribueront à l'autodétermination. Les élèves se sentiront alors, s'ils choisissent de le faire, capables de contrer les forces sociales présentes. Il sera donc fort probable que les élèves soient motivés à opter pour une identité francophone et à la vivre par leurs choix langagiers. Les incitations à « parler français » pourraient servir alors de rappel aux choix identitaires intrinsèques au lieu d'être source de motivation extrinsèque.

5. *Conscientisation et engagement*

Le pivot de cette pédagogie se situe certainement dans la conscientisation et l'engagement. Les élèves doivent pouvoir prendre conscience des forces tendant à l'assimilation. Cette conscientisation peut ensuite engendrer l'engagement à améliorer la situation. Nous pouvons nous demander si les individus sont en mesure de se réaliser pleinement s'ils ne sont pas disposés à valoriser leur groupe et à affirmer leur héritage. Souhaitons que les groupes minoritaires, par le biais de l'éducation, y parviennent, et qu'ils reconnaissent et exercent leurs droits collectifs. À cette fin, il faut faire adopter une perspective critique, qui n'est toutefois pas innée; elle se développe avec un entraînement systématique à remettre les idées en question, à les opposer et à les confronter. Idéalement, ce questionnement critique fera naître la volonté de faire une différence.

6. *Partenariats*

Va et sois francophone… Que l'école devienne le pivot de la communauté minoritaire et contribue à son épanouissement. OUF! La tâche est grande! L'école ne peut le faire sans soutien. Suscitons un effort collectif de prise en charge communautaire. La communauté ne survivra pas sans l'école et l'école ne survivra pas sans la communauté.

Conclusion

Pennac propose dans son livre la découverte des plaisirs de la lecture. La pédagogie décrite ici cherche également une découverte agréable. Il ne s'agit donc pas d'imposer un surcroît de travail. Certaines composantes recommandées sont déjà mises en pratique par de nombreux membres de la profession. Ce qui est préconisé ici est l'adoption systématique d'approches de nature transformative et conscientisante, qui visent l'individu *et* la communauté, soit une pédagogie en étroite corrélation avec les particularités du contexte francophone. Au-delà d'un projet linguistique, la conscientisation, l'engagement et l'affirmation faciliteront l'atteinte de la construction identitaire souhaitée, sans l'imposer.

Les enseignantes et les enseignants sont des acteurs clés de cette découverte identitaire en raison de leurs contacts quotidiens avec les jeunes. Toutefois, ils ne peuvent pas être les seuls à s'investir au jour le jour. L'épanouissement de nos enfants et de nos communautés francophones passera par un projet collectif touchant l'ensemble de la communauté, incluant les services à la petite enfance jusqu'à l'éducation postsecondaire et continue.

Marianne Cormier, professeure adjointe, Université de Moncton (pour la Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants).

February 14, 2007

Janeway Day 2007

Every year, Janeway Day in the schools provides an opportunity for students and teachers to help other children. Since 1986 students and teachers have donated more than $755,000 to the Janeway.

Here's how to participate in Janeway Day 2007:

Ask students and teachers to forego the equivalent of recess monies for one day.
That's their donation to the Janeway.
Or organize another fundraising event.

All monies will be forwarded to the Janeway to help the children of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Caring and Sharing for the Janeway.

A project of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association.

Welcome to the Land of Ideas

The 2006 Goethe-Institut Fellowship Tour of Germany

by KEITH SAMUELSON

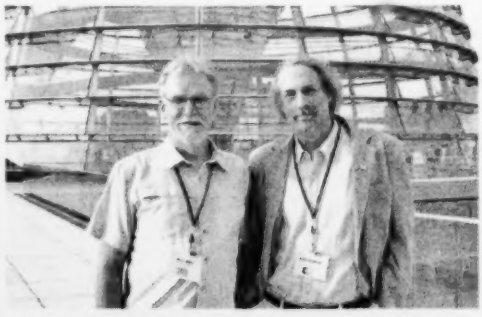
"Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime."

Mark Twain was inspired to write these words after a visit to Germany in the 1860s. Almost a century and a half later, I visited many of the same sites he described so eloquently in *Innocents Abroad*. The Goethe-Institut's Transatlantic Outreach Program (TOP) gave me a much deeper appreciation of the significance of his words.

TOP is a public-private partnership between the Goethe-Institut, the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, Deutsche Bank and the Robert Bosch Foundation. The initiative is based on the idea that the best lessons in life come from experience. From Munich to Nürnberg, from Lake Constance to the Black Forest, from Dresden to Weimar, and from Frankfurt to Berlin, each corner of Germany is sampled through sight, sound, touch, and taste!

These all-expense-paid travel seminars are two weeks in length. Four groups of about 15-20 educators visit different regions of Germany during July and August, and all "Fellows" spend a few days in Berlin and Frankfurt. This past summer Harry Lewis from Victoria and I became the first Canadian participants. Our itinerary focused on Berlin, Schwerin, Hamburg and Frankfurt with many excursions to smaller towns and villages along the way.

Our tour group included 13 teachers, professors and Program Coordinators from across North America and three Goethe-Institut staff members. We met at the Institute's head office in downtown Atlanta where Dr. Michael Nentwich, Executive Director of the Goethe-Institut, provided a fascinating orientation on German culture, politics and economics. Dr. Nentwick gave us a great deal of practical advice to ease the transition into German culture. We were assured that Germany is a very safe country and that we should feel free to wander around any large city in our leisure time without jeopardizing our safety. We were gently cautioned to always be on time and to respect the schedule and social etiquette of our host country. In Germany, punctuality is next to godliness and German orientation towards personal space is different from what is acceptable in North America.



Keith Samuelson (right) with Harry Lewis, teacher from Victoria, B.C.

The summer of 2006 was a particularly exciting time to visit Germany. In the year of the World Cup, the German government and business leaders are presenting the country's modern face to the world with an initiative entitled *Germany – The Land of Ideas*. The project is a showcase of the inventiveness, creativity and open-mindedness of the German people.

The practical application of German creativity was evident during our private tour of the Reichstag, a modern parliament in a historic setting. We were very impressed with its state of the art energy system and other services which comply with the most stringent environmental criteria. The German Parliament features transparency from the basement to the open-air rooftop dome which provides visitors with a spectacular panoramic view of the city's landmarks.

Transparency is not only central to Germany's political system and the unique architecture of the Reichstag. It is evident in Germany's attempts to come to terms

with the past. Goethe Fellows had an opportunity to visit Sachsenhausen, a concentration camp located just outside Berlin, which served as the model for Auschwitz and the other death factories of Poland. We also met Dr. Wolf Kaiser at the House of the Wannsee Conference, a stately lakeside villa in an exclusive suburb on the outskirts of Berlin. The present Memorial Site was used between 1941 and 1945 as a guesthouse for the SS. On January 20,1942, in a top-secret ninety-minute meeting, 15 high-ranking representatives of various ministries discussed and planned the deportation and murder of all European Jews. Their suggestions reflected the specific interests of their respective departments but none of them raised any basic objections regarding systematic and indiscriminate murder. The central objectives of the Memorial site within the "house of the perpetrators" are to provide information about the fate of the victims and remember them by means of a permanent exhibition, a library, and various publications and educational programs.

Dr. Kaiser explained that Holocaust education is compulsory in Germany. The event is covered thoroughly in all schools as part of the required curriculum in every Land (state) and includes student visits to concentration camps and memorial sites. The Holocaust still receives regular media attention. Dr. Kaiser is convinced that memory makes a recurrence of the nightmare impossible, at least in Germany.

It would be very difficult to disagree with him, especially after visiting Berlin's most recent memorial. The controversial "Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe", designed by architect Peter Eisenman, is an appropriate, respectful and dignified monument. A vast grid of 2,711 dark concrete pillars of various sizes seem to sink into the earth to grapple with the moral ambiguities that separate guilt and innocence, good and evil, life and death. Even its central location seemed symbolic – near the Brandenburg Gate, Checkpoint Charlie and the site of Hitler's bunker; a short walk from Rosenstrasse, where German women protested the arrests of their Jewish husbands, and the square across the street from Humbolt College, where Einstein taught, the site of the infamous Nazi book burnings in the '30s.

Berlin has been in a constant state of reconstruction since the end of the Second World War, yet every neighbourhood is steeped in history. The city certainly provided a dramatic setting for the interactive learning activities organized by our hosts. Nikolaus Graf Lambsdorff, Director General for Communication with the Federal Foreign Office, treated us to a gourmet lunch and a thought-provoking presentation at an exclusive downtown restaurant. He spoke about a wide range of global issues, particularly the situation in the

Middle East, Germany's relationship with the U.S. and Russia and its place in the European Union.

We met Dr. Hartmut Mangold at the Federal Ministry of Transport, Construction and Housing for his presentation on *The Reconstruction of East Germany*. It was truly fascinating to learn about the social, cultural, economic and psychological aspects of reunification from a government official who was directly involved in its implementation. Dr. Mangold said that the adoption of the former West German legal system was an unqualified success but the introduction of a free market economic system into a former Communist state was extremely challenging.

Keith Samuelson at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

Wolf Kuhnelt, Director of the Berlin Museum Service, provided us with another perspective on modern German culture. He pointed out that 2% of the federal budget is reserved for museums. Berlin has over 200 museums, collections and archives, offering its citizens one of the most significant and diverse museum landscapes in the world. From A to Z, from the Allied Museum to the Zoological Garden, these museums present just about everything that has concerned humanity from the past and present.

Throughout the tour, our day trips to smaller towns were deeply enriching experiences. The narrow cobblestone streets and towering windmills of Werder Havel, a picturesque little village on a small island just outside Berlin, provide a very different sense of space after becoming acclimated to the sprawling boulevards of the capital. At Potsdam we visited the factory of Alexander Schuke, the master of organ building, and learned how the careful processing of the finest material and outstanding artistic intonation leads to the highest aesthetic and musical standards. We spent an afternoon at Marmorpalais, the summer palace of one of Germany's most progressive leaders, Frederick the Great, and reveled in the beauty of its verdant gardens, immaculate rolling hills and sparkling fountains. It is easy to understand why he chose it for his final resting place.

At Schloss Cecilienhof, the site of the Potsdam Conference, we were treated to a fascinating guided tour of each room. The impact of the past was palpable as we stood in the main conference hall where Truman, Stalin and Atlee signed a document that led to the Cold War partition of Berlin and where Truman decided to drop the A-bomb on Japan. One can't help but wonder what would have happened had Churchill not returned to England only to lose the election at home while the conference was still in session.

On the train to Schwerin we marveled at the perfect little fences and neat bails of hay sprinkled across the countryside. Deeper into the former East Germany, drab buildings and grey apartment blocks abandoned since the Communist era squat alongside revived, colorful homes and well-tended gardens. The quintessential Eastern European town square features Neoclassical and Baroque architecture undisturbed by the Second World War and quaint little shops on cobblestone streets off narrow passageways busy with activity. An absurd statue just outside the ancient cathedral depicts an entire community mooning King Henry in defiance as he marches triumphantly through town. We visited an exhibition which included world famous sculpture Arno Brecker's naked, beer-bellied "David and Goliath" and Schwerin Castle, which dominates the landscape and is one of the most famous tourist attractions in the country.

We had the pleasure of hearing other speakers and presentations as well. Denver Campbell, an American working as Project Manager for the Investment Promotion Agency of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, explained how the government is trying to develop the country's poorest region. Managing Director of Schwerin's Vocational Training Center, Herbert Michel, spoke to us on the work of the Center. This occupational training school provides employment-oriented learning for small and medium-sized enterprises, including Information Technology, metal, woodworking, plastics and recycling. At the end of his presentation, quoting German conceptual artist Joseph Beuys, Michel's said "The future we want has to be invented. Otherwise we get the future we do not want".

At Mecklenburg's Federal Institute for School and Education, Teachers' Training College, Dr. Walter Thomas began his presentation by thanking Americans for rebuilding Germany after the war. Norbert Frank, Head of Section, Ministry of Education, Sciences and Culture, expressed his concern about the 100% increase in non-graduates over the past ten years, 25% for whom reading and writing skills are so low they can't take part in normal life. Changes have been introduced so that there are smaller classes, more team teaching and integrated subjects as well as a more flexible curriculum and timetable. We learned about Germany's participation in the innovative "Productive Learning" project network that

started as a concept in Manhattan in 1971and spread to Edinburgh, Vienna, Budapest and Kiev.

One town we visited was Lubeck, a scenic little tourist island and UNESCO World Heritage site. We visited the home of one of the twentieth century's literary giants, Thomas Mann, sampled delicious marzipan at the famous confectionary "Niederegger", had lunch at Schiffergesellschgfst, the oldest restaurant in Europe, built in 1535, and enjoyed the deep strains of the largest organ in the world at the awe-inspiring cathedral. Then we were off to Hamburg for a very different experience.

Hamburg is a "city state", like Berlin and Bremen, and a major European cultural center. We toured the "Rathaus", or city hall, of the State Chancellery of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg. Next door at the Hamburg Museum there were long line-ups for Mexican surrealist painter Frida Khalo's exhibition, and we were ushered in to contemplate the vitality and emotion of one of Latin America's most revered artists. The "Suitcase Full of Hope" exhibition at Cap San Diego, an ancient sailing ship, deals with the immigration to the New World at the turn of the century via the port of Hamburg. We were deeply touched by the heartbreaking stories of some of the five million immigrants to the U.S. and two hundred thousand to Canada who were jammed into filthy cargo holes while first-class passengers passed the time in luxury suites and private promenades.

We certainly got to see Hamburg from every angle – literally from the ground up! Our tour of Norddeutsche Affinerie copper-smelting plant, complete with company overalls and hardhats, provided a truly unique experience for educators. We were surprised at how interesting it was to learn about this process and were impressed with the skill and pride of the company's presenters and employees.

Near the dock where a plaque commemorates the place where the St. Louis was turned away during the Holocaust, Wulf Engelke welcomed us on board the launch "Hansa" for a private boat tour of Hamburg Harbour. We sailed through canals full of massive barges from all over the world and were treated to a totally different view of the skyline from the one we'd experienced in all our hours of walking from one site to another. Our host was thrilled with my gifts from a distinctive port city on one side of the Atlantic to one on the other: a photo book of St. John's, a "Global Citizen" t-shirt from CIDA, an Asper Foundation cap and special pin from the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

The panoramic view from the glass-enclosed, top-floor corporate boardroom at *Der Spiegel* was a spectacular backdrop for Research Assistant Eveline Metzen's presentation. *Der Spiegel* is Germany's leading news magazine and the largest in Europe. Ms. Metzen provided

us with an informative and interesting overview of the magazine's rich history and told us fascinating stories about recent global issues, including 911 and the Hamburg cell connection.

Bucerius Law School, the only private law school in Germany, has a beautiful, ultra-modern campus in the center of the city adjacent to a huge, manicured public park. A couple of very proud students gave us an insider's view of their rigorous academic program and vibrant social life. The school offers scholarships for minorities and underprivileged applicants who could not afford to attend otherwise.

There was an emotional parting at the train station when we were leaving for Frankfurt, just as there had been when we left Berlin. At every destination, the group and our tour guides became very close during the time we had together.

Frankfurt is Germany's financial capital but it also has a rich cultural history. We learned a great deal about both at Deutsche Bank, which is a major contributor to the Goethe-Institut's Transatlantic Outreach Program.

Reinhard Frost of the Historical Institute of Deutsche Bank presented on the history of Deutsche Bank, taking us through the first world war, the Depression, the Third Reich, the Cold War, Reunification and the age of Globalization. Some of the most fascinating stories dealt with the Nazi era, when the bank was nationalized and practically destroyed. Two branch managers were killed for not cooperating with Nazis, and after the war there was the matter of restitution of money stolen from Jews who had been sent to concentration camps. Other interesting stories dealt with Cold War espionage, the kidnap and murder of their Managing Director by terrorists in '89 and the challenges of reunification.

We were privileged to meet an extraordinary array of experts from various fields throughout the tour. However, the highlight of the trip would have to be witnessing the passionate eloquence of Hanns Michael Holz, Global Head of Corporate Citizenship and Sustainable Development for Deutsche Bank. Mr. Holz held us spellbound as he spoke about the impact of the corporate world's decisions on human beings. He explained that fair trade and economic cooperation with developing countries is in our own interest, for it leads to political stability. He spoke proudly about the international diversity of Deutsche Bank. Most people who manage their branches in other countries are nationals of that country, not ex-patriot Germans. Mr. Holz urged us to educate young people to share a set of core values in the areas of human rights, labor standards, the environment and anti-corruption endeavours. He stressed the need for a new paradigm to reflect the environmental and social consequences of decisions and investments. When we spoke about our efforts to instill these values in young people, he responded with enthusiasm. We felt like we had been given a most prestigious endorsement to continue our work.

After a guided tour of the bank's impressive collection of German modern art, we had lunch in Deutsche Bank's top-floor boardroom with TOP program consultant Susan Stern, author of *Jewish Life in Germany Today* and *These Strange German Ways*. Ms. Stern's hour and a half presentation went by in a flash. Her light-hearted approach was very funny and perceptive, her attitude tolerant and affectionate. Yet she appeared to remain somewhat perplexed by the idiosyncrasies of a culture she's not only been living and teaching in, but writing and presenting about, for decades.

Our speakers in Frankfurt and, indeed, everyone we met on the tour, provided solid grounds for optimism about the future. A prime example would be Vera Klinger, Project Manager at Frankfurt's Office for Multicultural Affairs, whose task is to foster the constructive co-existence of the various cultural groups and to promote their integration.

The last site we visited was historic Heidelburg, the site of one of the most famous castles in the world. Its towers offer a breathtaking view of the old town next to the river at the rim of the city. In 1878, Mark Twain stood here and wrote: "I have never enjoyed a view which had such a serene and satisfying charm about it as this one gives."

It was a pleasure to share this experience as a 2006 Goethe Fellow. Indeed, Twain could have been talking about the TOP program when he wrote: "...nothing so liberalizes a man and expands the kindly instincts that nature put in him as travel and contact with many kinds of people."

Applications for the 2007 Transatlantic Outreach Program are now available online at www.goethe.de/top. Teachers who are interested may contact Wood Powell at top@washington.goethe.org or Keith Samuelson at keithsamuelson@esdnl.ca.

Keith Samuelson is an English teacher at Prince of Wales Collegiate in St. John's.

2006-08 School Board-Teacher Liaison Committees

The following are the NLTA representatives on the 2006-08 School Board-Teacher Liaison Committees. These two-year committees are established in accordance with Article 5 of the Collective Agreement (Article 16 in Labrador West) to provide the opportunity for teachers to discuss with representatives of their employer, local issues such as board policies, physical conditions of the school, curriculum issues, and holiday schedules, that impact on their work life yet are not grievable items under the Collective Agreement. Your Association sees these Committees as being valuable avenues for dealing with employer/employee issues at the local district level. **(C) = Chairperson**

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Conseil scolaire francophone
(one provincial committee) TBA

Since You Asked...

by PAT HOGAN

Q. I read your article in the April 2006 issue of *The Bulletin*. You talked about the idea of converting our group life insurance coverage to an individual policy. Would you recommend term life or whole life? Which insurance company, in your opinion, offers the best rates and coverage? Signed, Curious

A. Dear Curious, these are all good questions. Let's start by clarifying what it is we are talking about.

Term Insurance Coverage:

- It is temporary or defined by time, e.g. 10 year term, 20 year term, or Term to age 100.
- It is pure protection and nothing else. If the insured person dies while the policy is in force, the beneficiary collects.
- It has no investment component. It cannot be "cashed in".
- It is like your car or home insurance – you may never use it, but if you do, it can ease the financial burden of death.
- It often comes as a group plan (like our NLTA A1, A2 & A5 options), where all members of a group are accepted regardless of the health status of any one person in the group.
- It also comes as an individual plan, with medical evidence requested.

Whole Life Insurance Coverage:

- It is permanent; it lasts for life.
- It contains the protection described above *plus* an investment component that increases in value over time. It builds "cash surrender value".
- It comes with an assurance that your beneficiary will collect after your death.
- It is initially more costly to purchase than term life, but over time, it is cheaper.
- It usually comes as an individual plan where each application is considered by a person's sex, age, smoker/lifestyle, health profile.

So, clearly, we are dealing with two different products...different in their constituent elements, different in duration, different in cost.

The key question: What scenarios or purposes do I want my life insurance to serve after my NLTA group plans all cease at age 65? Here are seven examples:

Income replacement for the surviving spouse
Example: Frank wants some financial protection in place for his wife, who is younger, in the event of his death. She has only a small pension and she would be left in a difficult way on his reduced survivor pension. Their savings and RRSPs are meager, although they do own their own home. A whole life policy *or* a "T-100" (i.e., "term-to-age 100") policy would achieve his purpose. He favors the T-100 option since this is "lifelong coverage" and it is less expensive than whole life to purchase.

Creating an estate
Example: Susan would like to leave something to her only daughter after her death. Raising a child as a single parent within financial constraints was not easy in her modest apartment. To "create an estate" to assist her child would be a dream come true.

Preserving an estate
Example: Tom loves nothing more than having the family out to the cottage on summer weekends. Over the years, real estate values have mushroomed. Tom wants the property to remain after his death for the enjoyment of his children and grandchildren. His accountant tells him that on his death, Tom's tax bill on capital gains would be considerable. This bill would have to be paid immediately...or the property sold to pay the taxman! To "preserve the estate", a whole life or T-100 (term life) policy for the anticipated amount of the tax bill – and other expenses on death – would suit Tom's wishes perfectly.

Note: Assuming you want your heirs to wind up with more than the taxman, compare the cost of life insurance premiums you will pay over your lifetime with the amount of tax you can forecast on death. Life insurance is a bargain! Moreover, let your heirs pay the premiums, since they will reap the benefits. The death benefit will be much like a tax-free investment in their hands, since no tax is payable on insurance proceeds.

Benefiting a charity
Example: Lois has always believed in sharing her good fortune with those less fortunate. Since her sister died last year of cancer, she has supported the work of the Canadian Cancer Society. By naming this registered charity as the beneficiary of her permanent life insurance policy, she knows that a generous gift will follow her death. In addition, she has set it up so that her premium payments now are treated as donations that she can claim each year on her tax return.

The flexibility of living benefits
Example: Roger is interested in the protection features of life insurance, but also in the investment features. A whole life policy can do both. If he dies, his beneficiary collects. If he lives to a ripe old age, the policy is flexible as to provide some interesting benefits while he is yet still living. He knows that when he is in his declining years, his whole life policy will have a large "cash surrender value" upon which he can draw as either a policy loan or as a policy assignment. This would create a tax-free fund of money that could be used: a) to meet potential health care costs in his later years, e.g. long term care; b) to shelter his other financial assets from being depleted prematurely; c) to provide additional money to augment his other forms of pension income.

Note: This is the main difference between the "whole life" and "T-100" policies. While both types provide life-long coverage, the latter provides a death benefit only. The former, in addition to providing a death benefit, also provides a growing asset that can be used to provide benefits while the insured person is still living. The larger premium paid provides this "extra" feature.

An extension of coverage beyond age 65
Example: Charles and Joan, a couple in their fifties, have been doing well building up their financial resources, including RRSPs, over the years. With their combined pensions now and CPP, OAS and their RRIFs coming on stream later, they require only some "bridging" funds in the event that Joan, as higher income earner, were to pass away between ages 65 and 75. A "20 year term life" policy that extends her life insurance to age 75 would be affordable and give them peace of mind.

Using our NLTA group policy "conversion" clause
Example: Irene knows her NLTA A1 & A2 group coverage is in place to age 65. She wants to continue her life insurance beyond age 65, but she is in poor health and feels she would not be accepted for individual coverage. Fortunately, the "conversion clause" in both A1 & A2 policies gives her a 30-day "window" on her 65th birthday to convert – with no health questions asked! So, despite being a poor underwriting risk, her application is guaranteed to be accepted.

Note: Using the "conversion" route is generally a costly option; even if she is "rated", i.e. accepted, despite her medical profile at a higher scale of premium, she may still find individual insurance cheaper than using "conversion".

Clearly, the needs and wishes of each person are so different, depending on the purpose and intent, and ability to pay! So, once you examine your own situation, a competent and qualified insurance professional can offer you competing quotes to fit your situation.

New scenarios have come along and individual life insurance is the means of providing solutions to these problems posed…short of winning the lottery! Happily, too, you will find that you may need much less coverage, i.e. a smaller policy, than you did in former years.

Pat Hogan is a Certified Financial Planner (CFP) with Great-West Life and Quadrus Investment Services. He would welcome inquiries, without obligation, at hogan@nl.rogers.com or at 709-754-0413.

SHARING OUR CULTURES/
À LA DÉCOUVERTE DE NOS CULTURES

March 25-27, 2007

Delta St. John's Hotel. Sharing Our Cultures is an educational and multicultural event showcasing 25+ countries represented in our schools. Date: March 25 (official public opening); March 26 & 27 (for schools only). Two sessions each day (9:15 - 11:00 a.m. and 12:15 - 2:00 p.m.) for elementary, junior and senior high students. For more information or to register please email quaicoe@gmail.com.

ARTS WORK II CONFERENCE

May 2007

Corner Brook. A two-day provincial arts in education conference for teachers (K-12). Watch for more details in future issues of *The Bulletin*. Contact donnamills@gov.nl.ca.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' COUNCIL CONFERENCE

May 23-25, 2007

Terra Nova Golf Resort. Theme: *Instructional Leadership… and Other Duties as Assigned.* Contact: Rick Thorne, Random Island Academy, Tel: 709-547-2379 (s), Fax: 709-547-2549, richardthorne@esdnl.ca.

Dates to Remember

January 2007

Jan 7	**Final Deadline:** Nominations for NLTA President and Vice-President
Jan 11	**Deadline:** Proposed changes, amendments or repeal of by-laws for BGM 2007 must be received at NLTA office by this date
Jan 15	**Deadline:** 2007 Christmas Card Contest entries
Jan 15	**Deadline:** Receipt of Barnes, Bancroft, Allan Bishop, and Special Recognition Award Nominations at the NLTA office
Jan 18	**Deadline:** Professional Development Fund applications

February 2007

Feb 1	**Deadline:** Applications for Educational Leave – teachers must make prior application to school board
Feb 6	Election of NLTA President and Vice-President
Feb 11	**Deadline:** All remaining material for Convention issue of *The Bulletin* (nominations for Provincial Executive, resolutions for BGM, branch delegates and branch alternates' names) must be postmarked by this date for inclusion in Convention issue of *The Bulletin*
Feb 14	Janeway Day in the Schools
Feb 21-22	NLTA Executive Meeting
Feb 23-24	Joint Council Meeting

March 2007

Mar 4-10	Education Week
Mar 15	Deadline: Professional Development Fund applications
Mar 31	Board Deadline: Notice for retirement at end of school year
Mar 31	Deadline: Centennial Study Award Applications
Mar 31	Deadline (on or before March 31): International Conference Presenters Program Applications

April 2007

Apr 10-13	Biennial General Meeting
Apr 1	Deadline: Johnson Bursary Applications
Apr 15	Deadline: Notice of postponement of Deferred Salary Leave or withdrawal from DSLP
Apr 30	Deadline: Deferred Salary Leave Applications
Apr 30	Deadline: Year-end resignation from contract

VTC Book Club Blog
through the NLTA Professional Development Division

If you would like to be one of **10** teachers to get a **free copy** of the book "What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action" by Robert J. Marzano, this is all you have to do:

1) Send an email to scardoulis@nlta.nl.ca on or before the sign up deadline of **December 15, 2006**. The first 10 teachers who respond will be selected.

2) Once you have read the book you will be asked to participate in a series of online discussions as part of the VTC Book Club Blog.

Further information
is available on the VTC website at
www.virtualteachercentre.ca

NLTA Christmas Hours

Please be advised that the NLTA Building will be closed from December 23rd to January 1st (inclusive) to allow staff to enjoy the holiday season.